

Montana Arts Council

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Excellent stories about the “return on investment”

From the Alberta Bair Theater

“ABT Arts Education workshops give me the experience and understanding to teach mathematics to nontraditional students with a nontraditional technique. I teach geometry using pattern blocks, writing, and songs. I teach multiplication facts with songs, rhymes and pictures. Without ABT Arts Education workshops, I had neither the background nor the knowledge to teach in this manner. Additionally, my students participate in the ABT school performances, allowing them to attend one performance at ABT at no cost to them. Ninety-two percent of my students are classified low income according to Title One, which means that enjoyment of the arts is not readily available. This is the only performance some of my students will see this year – for many, it is their first exposure to the arts. Their excitement is hard to contain.”

In November 2006, Nnenna Freelon, five time Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter, led *Babysong*, a workshop with several pre-selected babies and their parents as well as parents-to-be to help them learn about how the human voice can be used as a healing, nurturing and teaching tool. ABT partnered with St. Vincent Healthcare to present the workshop. Health care workers, educators, musicians, parents, childcare-givers were able to attend the class as observers. The workshop, which took place on the campus of St. Vincent Healthcare, took place the day before Freelon performed on stage at the Alberta Bair Theater.

From the Archie Bray Foundation

In 2005, Daniela Abel made a visit to the Bray that changed her life. Already involved in ceramics in California, she fell in love with Montana and the Bray, and in the summer of 2006 moved with her husband from California to Helena specifically so she could be near the Bray. Since then, her life has been intertwined with the Bray, where she volunteers, participates in community classes and attends workshops. The residents and staff have become her friends and family, and she is often seen working on her ceramics in the classroom or visiting the residents in the studio.

From the Custer County Art and Heritage Center

At the end of summer, the Mayor of Miles City just returned from a vacation to the southwest U.S. and visited to express his amazement at the visibility of the arts in similarly sized (or smaller) communities. He brought a promotions packet to support his impressions of what this vibrant activity was doing to support a strong tourism market and the economic strength gained from it. He was questioning what our town could do to make similar strides for this kind of attraction. Similar, but different and more attuned to the history and cultural strengths that exhibit what’s unique to this place of ours.

From the Equinox Theatre, Bozeman

We strive to develop a close relationship with our audience and students as we explore modern life, the nature of relationships and the idea of community through original interactive comedy and issue-based drama.. Our teen theatre production of “Inherit the Wind” brought together teens from different ideologies and gave them a safe place to explore their own beliefs. Our recent Teen Theatre production of *Inherit the Wind* - a dramatization of the Scopes-Monkey trial in which a teacher was jailed for teaching evolution - brought together teens from different ideologies and gave them a safe place to explore their own beliefs. One young actress was particularly instrumental in fostering discussion. She came from a quite conservative Christian background, and was herself very firm in her beliefs. As the director of the production, Executive Director Soren Kisiel, worked hard to make it clear that this production was not designed to deliver a definite message, but instead to encourage conversation on the topic. And indeed, after a number of very open conversations during the rehearsals, this teenage student expressed that she was so relieved to finally have a safe venue to discuss her Christian beliefs, curiosities and frustrations - a place in which she could be open about her religion and did not feel either judged by her less religious peers or guilty from her more conservative peers. Delightfully, this in turn created an atmosphere among the other teens of acceptance and tolerance of a wide breadth of viewpoints.

Great Falls Symphony

The Great Falls Development Authority, Benefis Healthcare, the Great Falls Clinic, the Downtown Business Improvement District, the Chamber of Commerce, etc., all use the Great Falls Symphony as an example of the rich arts and cultural environment in our community. They enclose our brochures in their promotional packets, and bring clients considering locating in this region to concerts. This acknowledgement of the connection between cultural environment and economic development speaks directly a perceived return on investing in the GFSA.

Paris Gibson Square, Great Falls

State funding of the arts is one of several financial resources that Paris Gibson Square draws on to provide ongoing operating support for our organizations. As a result, state funding provides the solid organizational structure upon which we build our programs. It is the strength of our programs and our benefit to the community that draws this and additional external funding. Our biggest success this year was in developing a new relationship with Pacific Steel & Recycling. While the company has offices throughout the Northwest, its headquarters are in Great Falls. I met with the President/CEO and the Marketing Director last summer and requested a large sponsorship from the organization which in essence would pay for the general admission of our patrons for one full year. As a result, the Museum’s admission became free for everyone who wanted to visit. This increased our visitorship by several thousand and Pacific Steel & Recycling considered their sponsorship not just a gift to the organization, but a gift to the entire community. They have agreed to continue their support of the free admission for several more years, after which they will help us find another corporate benefactor who will continue the gift. Additionally, because of our reputation in the community and the relationship we built with the initial gift, the company made an additional donation to pay for important improvements to the grounds, including repairs to our parking lot and sprinkler system.

Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings

The Yellowstone Art Museum has many stories of its successes. It is very easy to list the numbers of exhibitions, the attendance at special events, the number of donations and other facts and figures. However, the greatest success of the Museum isn't necessarily in the raw data but in the individual lives that are touched through our work., especially the YAM's educational outreach programs. The following is a description of just one child who has participated in our school outreach program. There are hundreds of inspirational stories that we can share from the participants in our programs. (This story with a photo of Isaiah is attached at the end of this report.)

Isaiah, a student at Crow Agency, has been blind from birth. With the individual help from his full time teacher, Lois Rides Horse, Isaiah participated in the classroom with the other students during art sessions. He was given the same opportunities as the other students with added tactile experiences. He enjoyed being included with the students, gaining their respect when he participated in the classroom discussions; such as the temperature of color and emotional responses to the mask making project. He enjoyed writing about art in Braille and loved sharing with the other students. When the class drew their self-portraits, Isaiah formed his in clay. The exercise proved to be an excellent study in self awareness. He paid much attention to every detail of his face including eye balls and tongue. He was proud of his creation and entered it in the Crow Indian Days Arts and Crafts Show, where he received a cash award for first place in sculpture .

Each student wrote a story about their mask to accompany the assignment. Isaiah typed his in Braille and submitted it. His story follows:

My Face

My face has a nose, a mouth, eyes, cheeks and a heart over the lips. I made it even though I can't see. The elk teeth block everything. I can see with my hands, even my ears. There are different shapes of thoughts all over my face. My favorite is the heart over the lips. I have to talk nice. The feathers are dancing on my head.

Art Museum of Missoula

The return on an investment in MAM is evident as MAM contributes to the health and welfare of Missoula's downtown economy. MAM decided to stay downtown to invest in the cultural heart of the town. MAM understands that the constant activity in and around our building contributes to a safe environment downtown. The business community has certainly acknowledged that MAM provides a quality of life enhancement. St Patrick's' Hospital is but one business that routinely brings prospective candidates for hire to MAM, to illustrate the cultural richness of our town. MAM has been participating in the planning for a street improvement program downtown and will blaze the trail, along with its neighbors on Pine Street, by creating a pedestrian plaza and sites for public art, as the final phase of its renovation and expansion project. One of MAM's slogans, "Art Means Business" is exemplified by the \$100,000 investment thus far in MAM's capital campaign by 45 local businesses.

Emerson Cultural Center, Bozeman

Several newcomers have mentioned recently that they relocated to Bozeman from other towns in the Northern Rockies because of the cultural scene.

Equinox Theater, Bozeman

“When [my daughter] participated this past school year she took a whole new turn in her life that has made a tremendous difference. Prior to her experience with Equinox Theatre, she had been experimenting with alcohol, struggling with peer relationships and floundering academically. As a result of the encouragement and enthusiasm you both gave her, she gained a new sense of self-esteem with a confidence in her abilities that she had been lacking. She was able to utilize her skills to improve her performance in school, due to her belief in her ability to be successful and an increased poise.. I cannot thank you enough for all that you are doing with the Teen Theatre.”

Montana Ballet, Bozeman

For every dollar of state funding, there are at least 20 dollars in the budget, and most of these dollars go directly into producing and marketing of events for the state taxpayers.

Paris Gibson Square, Great Falls

State funding is a “stamp of approval” for a non-profit organization. As such, it allows the organization to leverage additional funds from the private sector and from federal grants. The majority of state funds, and the additional matching funding provided from other sources, are spent locally in employee salaries, goods and services purchased, construction projects undertaken, etc., thus boosting the local economy.

The arts are a crucial component of quality of life for many residents of Great Falls and the surrounding area. Patrons have commented, countless times, that they “could not live here if it were not for the cultural opportunities afforded by The Square.”

Very Special Arts, Missoula

VSA has done extensive assessment and evaluation of its Missoula schools based mime program for children who are deaf for the past four years. The results indicate significant increase in the area of language arts-increase in use of expressive language, increased skill in writing, and increased vocabulary, which has resulted in excited learners as well as improved test scores. State funding has also helped us garner increased foundation support, an increase in individual and corporate support, and increased awareness of the need to include people with disabilities in arts programs, performances and in new learning opportunities.

Whitefish Theatre Company

The Whitefish Theatre Co.’s artistic services have been hugely influential in determining if people choose to move to Whitefish and the Flathead Valley. For example, our own Senator Dan Weinberg told Executive Director Carolyn Pitman that the O’Shaughnessy Center was definitely one of the reasons that he and his wife chose to move to the area. Furthermore, Letters to the Editor in the Whitefish Pilot have demonstrated the value of our services. On April 29, 2004 one letter contained the following: “We have been in Whitefish long enough to remember when you had to drive to Spokane or The Gorge or Calgary or Missoula to find anything approaching good music. That’s not the case anymore and we as a community should feel extremely fortunate and grateful for the quality of entertainment these people unknown to us provide.

Yellowstone Art Museum, Billings

Montana reported \$2 million in tourism revenue in 2005, thanks in part to a vibrant array of cultural offerings, including the Yellowstone Art Museum. State investment in the arts increases cultural tourism, encourages people to relocate to this area, and helps to motivate business growth. (Billings Clinic hosted two welcome receptions for new physicians at the Museum this year, informing us that this location was chosen in order to showcase Billings in the best possible way.)

Excellent examples of organizations increasing their “relevance:”

Equinox Theater, Bozeman

Equinox Teen Theatre offered a public performance of their original production “H2Awesome” at the annual watershed festival at the fish hatchery in Bozeman. This original production was conceived and performed by local middle school students. In collaboration with Montana Outdoor Science School, the teen actors studied the issues and controversies surrounding area watersheds and then wrote a play that explored those relationships. The teens then performed publicly at the theatre and at a free to the public performance at the Annual Watershed Festival held at the Fish Technology Center. This activity offered us the opportunity to build awareness of teen theatre while addressing a local issue that is important to our community.

Butte Symphony Association

The BSA has reached into the local community in our efforts to provide relevant programming for a more diverse audience. We have targeted the large Irish population in our community with a joint performance of the orchestra and a popular Irish singing group, included talented young local musicians in our orchestra and chorale, and showcased prize-winning Montana talent as concert guest artists.

Fort Peck Summer Theatre

The local Chamber of Commerce uses our third play as the theme for their “Crazy Days” sale. We inspired and financed an Eagle Scout project for a bat hotel on the side of the Theatre which will provide the bats a living alternative outside of the Theatre (they had found a way into an unused loft area); This project will have an educational component that we will promote; The solution to our bat problem is the result of a cooperative effort between the Council, the Valley County Extension Office, the Bureau of Land Management and the Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks.

Whitefish Theatre Company

In the fall of 2004 WTC produced The Diary of Anne Frank, newly adapted by Wendy Kesselman. We increased the relevance of this production in several ways: 1. An interactive program was available in the lobby where people could view her hiding place, family history, clothing and history of the period etc. 2. A holocaust survivor and acquaintance of Anne Frank was present after performances to answer questions. 3. A special Saturday performance was held for students accompanied by a parent or teacher. 4. A WTC board member, who is a retired rabbi and the actor who played Otto Frank, spoke in local schools on Anne Frank, the Holocaust, and the production.

In the spring of 2005 WTC produced How I Learned to Drive by Paula Vogel. In order to increase the understanding of this delicate subject of child sexual abuse, after each performance a discussion of the play and the issues surrounding it was held with interested audience members. Four individual counselor specialists and four Violence Free Crisis Line members participated in the discussions with the cast and audience members.

In April of 2005 WTC showed the film Grizzly Man, written and directed by Werner Herzog. In addition to bringing a whole new audience into the O’Shaughnessy Center, a discussion by local grizzly experts from the Glacier Institute and Montana Fish, Wildlife and

Parks was held after each showing. This helped to increase the relevance of this hugely successful and controversial film premiere.

Custer County Art and Heritage Center, Miles City

We are a member of the business community and hold membership and are active in the Chamber of Commerce and tourism efforts. We regularly host receptions, tours, club meetings and do community service through service clubs. The Art & Heritage Center maintains contact with city and county officials and workers. We have a shared contractual relationship with those entities and similarly, work with area school districts and care facilities. We participate in community events such as the “Christmas Stroll” and the “World Famous Bucking Horse Sale”.

Fort Peck Summer Theatre

We organize opportunities for our audience and donors to meet and socialize with the cast, crew and board members of the organization. We host an opening night party following the first show of the season for patrons, advertisers and sponsors to meet the staff; We offer refreshments to the audiences following the opening performances of the last three shows of the season; Each summer we host one or two events midway through the season as an opportunity for our supporters to mingle with the cast and crew before a show (i.e. a pitchfork fondue, an ice cream social, a barbeque with tours of the costume and set shops).

Excellent examples of “building relationships”

From the Alberta Bair Theater

Community Workshops: The Alberta Bair Theater strives to make available community workshops on the aesthetic, historical and/or social context of selected performances presented at ABT. The workshops are taught by educators, scholars, conductors and artistic directors and are designed to enhance audience enjoyment and understanding of performances. ABT offered seven community workshops during the 2006-2007 season. Workshop topics include *Theater 101* series, presented in conjunction with Montana State University-Billings downtown campus and included discussions on *Three Musketeers*, *a Couple of Blaguards*, *Lines Ballet*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Turtle Island String Quartet*. In addition, ABT also facilitated workshops on the opera *Madama Butterfly*, Mozart, *Babysong* – an interactive workshop for babies and parents taught by internationally-known jazz singer Nnenna Freelon, and a master dance class with members of Ailey II Dance Company.

Archie Bray Foundation

The Bray consistently works to develop relationships with members of our audience at all levels. We have significantly increased efforts to engage gallery visitors who have purchased artwork by extending personal invitations to become more involved in Bray activities and to stay more closely informed about those activities by becoming members. At this time, many of the community class members and gallery visitors have become volunteers.

We encourage personal interaction between the resident artists and workshop and class participants with potlucks during the class or workshop. We invite all class participants, faculty, residents and local members of our community to attend. In this casual setting, conversations occur and relationships develop that generate a fuller Bray experience.

Bozeman Symphony

Specific to building the relationship with our audience members we have our Family Pass to dress rehearsals. This program was established to allow families to attend all 7 dress rehearsals throughout the season for \$50. This opens the doors to people with young children who might be hesitant about bringing them to a formal concert and also to those who cannot afford regular ticket prices for an entire family. At the rehearsals Maestro Savery addresses the audience regarding the music, making it fun and accessible to all. This introduction to music in a relaxed concert atmosphere will build our future audiences. So far we can track two family pass holders who are now season subscribers.

Through out the grant period the Bozeman Symphony held underwriter receptions. These receptions are hosted by individuals/businesses who support the symphony and its mission and offer their assistance as hosts to spread our story. These gatherings range from 10 to 50 people and a wide variety of demographics. At these events the symphony makes a presentation, giving history, the current status of the organization and where our strategic plan is taking us. This past year, thanks to these events we have fourteen new “Underwriters”. These are individuals or businesses that pledge to give annually at a level of at least \$1200, equivalent to \$100 a month. This sustainable income is the financial infrastructure that will allow us to reach our goals.

As important, if not more important, is the even larger number of individuals who attended these receptions who now know our story and are able to talk in an informed way about the symphony. This impact has shown in increased numbers of new people attending individual concerts, often times turning into season ticket holders once they have heard a performance.

We have also opened a hospitality room at our concerts for our concert sponsors as well as different individuals at each concert, from large donors to many of our volunteers. This allows the board to get to know many more of the people behind the scenes and makes the attendees feel special and pampered.

Butte Symphony

Holding pre-concert “Conductor Chats” where the night’s program is discussed. In addition, during the pre-concert presentation at the last concert of the current season, a preview of the next season’s programming is shown with taped musical excerpts.

Equinox Theater, Bozeman

We will be sending cast members from upcoming youth productions into area schools to perform during the lunch hours. We intend to build more awareness and excitement for youth theatre productions as well as scholarship availability for acting classes.

We plan to expand on our non-profit collaborations by adding a special performance of our teen musical in which local non-profits are encouraged to have their supporters attend the performance and then receive a % of the ticket sales for their cause. We feel that this will expose our teen theater program to new audiences while raising money for multiple non-profit organizations in our service area.

Glacier Symphony

2005-2006 Season Launch of “First Timers/Half Off” program, where individuals who have never before purchased a season ticket could purchase a ticket for ½ the regular price (this was a tremendous success with bringing in 150+ new season ticket holders). While the response has slowed, we have continued the program with great success. In 06-07 there was a 30% return rate for Season Ticket purchasers who were First Timers the year before.

2005-2006 Season Launch of “Symphony Rush”. The Friday before a concert we sell concert tickets for \$10 (vs. \$20/\$15) at Flathead Valley Community College. Our average number of tickets sold during “Symphony Rush” has been 50+ tickets. Rush has been a big success. We release between 50 and 100 tickets for each concert and usually sell out. This makes tickets available at an affordable price to college students, teachers, and seniors.

Great Falls Symphony

Next season is the GFSA’s 50th Anniversary Season. We are having a board retreat in Ft. Benton in a few weeks to expand upon the plans already in place for this celebration. One of the topics on the table is “how to use this notable milestone in our history to build new relationships with new audiences.” We are planning on inviting a kaleidoscope of performing groups (high school choirs, dance studios, children’s choir, and more) to join us on one special concert celebrating not, the GFSA, but rather our cultural partners in the community, and their audiences. Also, we are looking at a series targeted at family audiences.

Paris Gibson Square, Great Falls

First, our Education program would like to build upon and expand our existing relationships with the school district and, more specifically, the art teachers and art community. Art is at the heart of what we do, and our desire to foster artistic development in students is the common thread we share. We would like to open even more active lines of communication with the art teachers, encouraging them to use The Square as a resource for educational materials and as an extension of their teaching in the schools. We also would like to open a lending library for art teachers, students, and the general public. Another component of this strategy is to encourage teachers in other disciplines outside art, such as history and the humanities, to incorporate exhibitions at The Square into their curriculum to increase cross-curricular educational opportunities.

Second, we would like to work with the Great Falls Development Authority and the two medical facilities in town to use The Square and other cultural resources as tools in their recruitment efforts for new businesses and new physicians. Paris Gibson Square is an important contributor to the quality of life in Great Falls yet businesses often see us more as a charity than a partner. By sharing the Museum's mission and benefits with the Development Authority, Benefits Healthcare and the Great Falls Clinic, we hope to increase their awareness and expand opportunities where we can work together to reach this untapped audience.

Sunburst Community Foundation, Eureka

A number of strategies were implemented in order to build relationships with our audiences. One strategy that was particularly effective was the implementation of providing food for purchase before key events, such as the last concert of the 2007 performing arts series. This provided an opportunity for families and friends to gather before the show and enjoy an ethnically inspired meal, as well the chance to visit with the performers. It increased our audience for the performance greatly, in addition to providing a fundraiser for the concert series. Another strategy that has been effective was the implementation of an email group that continues to grow and is approaching 250 members. Members are notified by email of upcoming events. Our discount card fundraiser was not as successful as we'd had hoped in terms of dollars raised, but it was a great opportunity to develop relationships with the business community and spread the word about Sunburst programs. We've met with the Key Club group on numerous occasions, but have yet to collaborate on a project together.

Hamilton Players

We are the main entertainment every year for the Bitterroot Valley Chamber of Commerce's Parade of Lights, kicking off the Holiday shopping season in downtown Hamilton. Our actors have portrayed historical figures at the historical site, The Daly Mansion, and for a PBS film documentary about The Bitterroot Flower.

Grandstreet Theatre, Helena

We encourage families to be in a play together and share that experience. After opening night of each show, we invite the entire audience to join the cast for an opening night party where the audience can meet the cast members. We send Thanksgiving Day cards and Valentine's Day

cards to our supporters to thank them for their support and to remind them of how important they are to Grandstreet's continued success.

Great Falls Symphony

The GFSA's "Celebrate Series," strengthens ties between the symphony and communities outside of Great Falls. The program which is designed to foster friendship and recognize the assets of the both entities, has thus far, showcased the communities of Conrad and Chester. A package of amenities is offered, relevant to each community such as discounted symphony tickets, an opportunity for their businesses and organizations to showcase their products and services at a symphony concert, etc. In return, the GFSA makes new friends and introduces new audiences to our "product."